



Ebola Q and A for Colleges and Universities

What is Ebola?

Ebola is an infection caused by a virus. The infection can result in internal and external bleeding. The virus is currently being transmitted in sub-Saharan Africa. The current outbreak has a mortality rate of more than 50 percent.

How are people infected?

The disease is primarily spread by direct contact with the body fluids of people ill with Ebola virus disease (Ebola). Infected body fluids are introduced through breaks in the skin or through mucous membranes. All body fluids are considered to be potentially infectious. This virus is not spread through air, food or water.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can start two to 21 days after infection. Initial symptoms usually are non-specific and can include fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, tiredness, and just not feeling well. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are common. Diarrhea is usually severe and watery. Additional symptoms can include stomach pain, unusual bleeding and lack of appetite.

What part of the world is experiencing the Ebola outbreak?

The current outbreak is occurring in four countries in western Africa: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

Who is at greatest risk for this disease?

The risk for the introduction of this virus into the United States is low. According to the CDC, Ebola does not pose a significant risk to the U.S. public.

People who have been in direct contact with the body fluids of people with Ebola are at greatest risk. Others at risk would be those who provided care for people ill with Ebola or were in direct contact with the bodies of persons who died from Ebola – usually during funeral practices. Members of the households of persons with Ebola are considered to be at low risk unless they have engaged in one of the high risk activities.

Is there a cure for Ebola?

No, there is no known cure for Ebola. Early supportive treatment may help improve outcomes.

I recently traveled from one of the affected countries; what should I do?

Notify your student health center of your recent arrival in the United States. They will instruct you to visit the student health center once a day for a fever check through the 21st day after your last exposure or from your departure from an affected country. Once 21 days have passed, you will not develop Ebola. If you develop a fever or have any other symptoms of illness within the 21 days, seek care immediately. Make sure to inform your healthcare provider of your travel.

Can I travel to these countries?

Travel to these countries should be avoided if possible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have issued a level three travel warning for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This means avoiding all non-essential travel to these areas. There is a level two travel alert for Nigeria, advising travelers to take extra precautions while in that country.

Is it safe to be in the same dorm or apartment complex with individuals from affected countries?

Yes. The risk for the general public in the United States, including college students, is low. In the unlikely event that a person becomes ill with Ebola in the U.S., they are only capable of spreading the virus after they develop symptoms. A healthy person would have to have direct contact with the body fluids of a symptomatic (infectious) person and those fluids would have to enter the healthy person's body through breaks in the skin or through mucous membranes in order for the virus to be passed. These scenarios are unlikely to occur under normal dormitory or apartment circumstances.

If I must travel to one of the affected countries, how can I protect myself?

If you need to travel to an affected country, you should avoid ill people while there. Do not come into contact with any body fluids or objects contaminated with body fluids. Avoid funeral and burial rituals. Avoid contact with raw meat or animals. If you need to seek health care, contact the American Embassy or Consulate in that country. After returning home, pay close attention to your health and contact student health for instructions. Seek medical care immediately if you develop any symptoms of illness within that 21 day period and make sure you advise your health care provider of your recent travel.

My family has traveled with me from an affected area; what should they do?

Have your family members contact your local public health agency for instructions on daily temperature monitoring. If a family member shows any sign of illness within 21 days of possible exposure, they must see a healthcare provider immediately and indicate their travel history.

Where can I get more information about Ebola?

You can find more information at the North Dakota Department of Health webpage at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease/ebola/default.aspx> or the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html?s_cid=cdc_homepage_feature_001, or you can contact your student health center or your health care provider.